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General Syllabus for Social Work at Mälardalen University

Applies to all doctoral students admitted to the third-cycle subject area
in Social Work from 15 January 2021 onwards.

Decision-making body: The Faculty Board

This document is a policy document for the third-cycle subject area and must
be revised/reviewed no later than four years after the latest ratification. The
School of Health, Care and Social Welfare is responsible for the revision.

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Introduction

Pursuant to Chapter 6, Section 25 of the Higher Education Ordinance, HF, (1993:100), the Faculty Board at Mälardalen University has established subjects which shall be arranged within third-cycle (doctoral) study programmes. Each third-cycle subject area shall have a ratified general syllabus in which the main contents of the study programme, specific entry requirements and other necessary regulations shall be stated in accordance with Chapter 6, Sections 26 and 27 of the HF.

The School of Health, Care and Social Welfare is responsible for establishing and revising the general syllabuses valid for the third-cycle subject areas for which the School serves as host School. The Faculty Board ratifies the established or revised general syllabuses for the subjects in which third-cycle (doctoral) studies are arranged at MDH.

In addition, the local policy document Rules and Regulations for Third-Cycle (Doctoral) Studies at Mälardalen University stipulates that the criteria for general entry requirements, description of selection criteria, description of compulsory modules, and requirements for thesis work and course demands shall also be stated in the general syllabus for the subject. Recommendations for prior knowledge which do not constitute formal entry requirements, as well as other relevant information, may also be given.

Subject description

Research domain

The Health and Welfare domain is built on the knowledge where health and welfare research converge. Research based on the School of Health, Care and Social Welfare's third-cycle subjects has, for example, focus on sustainability perspectives on societal development, lifestyle and health. Health and welfare are studied at the individual and group levels, as well as at the organisational and societal levels. Based on the various subjects, emphasis could be placed on either welfare or health, while both health and welfare aspects within the individual subject are highlighted.

The third-cycle subject area Social Work

The third-cycle subject area Social Work examines the causes and consequences of societal problems, and efforts to solve them. This is done within the framework of an understanding of societal conditions for human welfare, with a focus on individuals and groups who find themselves in a socially vulnerable situation in their lives and who therefore have need for social care or other welfare efforts.

The research comprises the individual, group, organisational and societal levels, and embraces controlling, preventive, supportive, caring and rehabilitating/habilitating and empowering efforts.

Research in Social Work has an interdisciplinary orientation, and embraces theories that overlap or are shared with other social science and behavioural science disciplines.

Area- and subject-specific qualitative targets

The general objectives of third-cycle (doctoral) studies as regards knowledge

and understanding, aptitudes and accomplishments, as well as the ability to evaluate and assess, are laid out in Appendix A and Appendix B, based on the Higher Education Ordinance.

To earn a doctoral degree in Social Work, the doctoral student shall demonstrate broad knowledge and systematic understanding of the research domain of Health and Welfare. Further, the doctoral student shall demonstrate in-depth and current knowledge within the subject of Social Work. The doctoral student shall also demonstrate familiarity with scientific methodology in general and scientific methods in Social Work in particular.

To earn a licentiate degree in Social Work, the doctoral student shall demonstrate knowledge and understanding of health and welfare, including current knowledge within the subject of Social Work. Further, the doctoral student shall demonstrate in-depth knowledge of scientific methodology in general and scientific methods in Social Work in particular.

The doctoral student shall demonstrate the ability to independently and critically review and assess new and complex phenomena, and also to conduct research. The research findings shall also be presented by the doctoral student in national as well as international contexts in dialogue with the scientific community and with society in general.

With both a doctoral and a licentiate degree, the doctoral student acquires the ability to make research ethics assessments and demonstrate insight into the possibilities and limitations of science.

One of the objectives of third-cycle (doctoral) studies at Mälardalen University is for the student to demonstrate the skills and ability for collaboration and co-production with the surrounding community. A degree at the third-cycle (doctoral) level therefore opens up opportunities for working with a number of advanced research-related work assignments within academia, the public sector, the civilian community or private enterprise, both nationally and internationally.

Programme structure

A doctoral degree is awarded after the doctoral student has completed a study programme of 240 higher education (HE) credits within the subject of Social Work for third-cycle (doctoral) studies.

A licentiate degree is awarded after the doctoral student has completed a study programme of 120 higher education (HE) credits within the subject of Social Work for third-cycle (doctoral) studies.

Individual study plan

For each doctoral student, an individual study plan shall be drawn up before admission. The individual study plan shall be ratified according to the rules determined by the Faculty Board. The individual study plan shall be followed up and revised annually. In addition to this, it shall be revised in connection with every major change in conditions for the studies. Every year, the doctoral student, principal supervisor and Dean of School shall certify by their signatures that they have reviewed and approved the plan.

Courses and other credit-bearing modules

Within the framework of the doctoral degree, 240 higher education credits, which corresponds to four years of full-time studies, studies equivalent to 60 higher education credits shall consist of courses and other credit-bearing modules, such as participation in seminars and conferences. For a licentiate degree, 120 higher education credits, studies equivalent to 30 higher education credits shall consist of courses and other credit-bearing modules.

For the course component of a doctoral degree, the following distribution applies:

- 37.5 higher education credits are compulsory, broken down as 15 credits from courses in health and welfare, and 22.5 credits from courses in research methodology
- 22.5 higher education credits are elective courses, chosen in consultation with the supervisors.

For the course component of a licentiate degree, the following distribution applies:

- 22.5 higher education credits are compulsory, broken down as 7.5 credits from courses in health and welfare, and 15 credits from courses in research methodology
- 7.5 higher education credits are elective courses, chosen in consultation with the supervisors.

Credit transfer is possible for all of the courses in accordance with Chapter 6, Section 6 of the HF.

The individual study plan shall specify, among other things, which courses are to be included in the study programme for the individual doctoral student, as well as how many credits each course corresponds to. Courses included in third-cycle (doctoral) studies, up to the doctoral and licentiate degrees respectively, shall have a ratified course syllabus stating the course's objectives, course content and number of credits. The grades Pass or Fail shall be used. The courses shall be assessed by an appointed examiner.

For active participation in doctoral student seminars in health and welfare, the doctoral student can be awarded 0.1 higher education credits per seminar. The total number of credits for participation in seminars may amount to a maximum of 4 credits for a doctoral degree and a maximum of 2 credits for a licentiate degree.

For referee-reviewed poster and oral presentations at national or international conferences, the doctoral student can obtain 1.5 credits for each presentation occasion. The total number of credits awarded for presentations at conferences is a maximum of 4.5 credits for a doctoral degree and a maximum of 3 credits for a licentiate degree.

The doctoral students shall present their thesis work in English at:

- the kick-off seminar
- the mid-way review (does not apply to doctoral students with a licentiate degree as a goal)
- the final seminar

Thesis

The thesis in Social Work shall correspond to at least 180 credits and may be designed as a monograph or as a compilation thesis.

An ethical review, when so required, shall have been completed before the collection of the empirical material has begun.

A compilation thesis consists of articles and a compilation component (*kappa* – introductory chapter). The articles shall meet the quality requirements for publication in international referee-reviewed journals. When the thesis is presented for public defence, at least half of the articles must have been published or accepted. Of the other articles, at least one shall have been submitted to a journal and one shall exist in the form of a complete article manuscript.

The compilation component shall illustrate the various sub-studies conducted, how they are connected, and what knowledge they have generated altogether. The compilation component, regardless of whether it is written in Swedish or English, must include summaries in both Swedish and English.

Licentiate thesis

The licentiate thesis in Social Work shall correspond to 90 credits and be designed as a monograph or as a compilation thesis. A compilation thesis shall consist of (at least) two articles and a compilation component (*kappa*). The articles shall meet the quality requirements for publication in international referee-reviewed journals. In order to conduct a licentiate seminar, one article (i.e. at least 50%) shall have been accepted for publishing and one shall exist in the form of a complete article manuscript.

The compilation component shall illustrate the various sub-studies conducted, how they are connected and what knowledge they have generated altogether. The compilation component, regardless of whether it is written in Swedish or English, must include summaries in both Swedish and English.

Entry requirements

General entry requirements

The general entry requirements for admission to third-cycle studies are regulated in Chapter 7 Section 39 of the HF:

1. earned a degree at the second-cycle (Master's) level,
2. met course requirements of at least 240 credits, of which at least 60 credits at the second-cycle (Master's level), or
3. acquired largely equivalent knowledge in some other way, either within or outside of the country.

The University may grant an individual applicant an exemption from the general entry requirements if special circumstances exist.

Specific entry requirements

In addition to meeting the general entry requirements, the applicant shall be deemed to have such capacity as is otherwise needed to benefit from the study programme.

1. the necessary knowledge from higher education or equivalent education and/or professional experience which is assessed based on the relevance to the research project,
2. necessary proficiency in the English language, both verbal and written,
3. an assessed ability to work independently and an ability to formulate and address scientific problems.

Selection

Selection from among applicants who meet the entry requirements is done by assessing the applicant's ability to benefit from the studies.

Selection is carried out by those responsible for the admissions process and an appointed recruitment group. Selection and any ranking of the applicants who are judged to be eligible shall be documented. Only doctoral students who can be offered supervision and otherwise acceptable conditions for study may be admitted. It is the responsibility of the Dean of School to ensure that a funding plan corresponding to the entire period of study is guaranteed at the time of admission.

In the selection process, equal rights and opportunities for applicants, regardless of sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnic origin, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age, shall be promoted in accordance with Mälardalen University's Equal Treatment Plan. When choosing between two equal applicants of different sex, the underrepresented sex shall generally be chosen.

Examination

Third-cycle (doctoral) studies are concluded with a doctoral degree or a licentiate degree. The doctoral student aspiring to a doctoral degree has the right, but not the obligation, to earn a licentiate degree as a stage of their third-cycle (doctoral) studies.

Degree of Doctor

To earn a Degree of Doctor, a total of 240 completed credits are required, consisting of:

- approved courses and other credit-bearing modules totalling 60 credits
- an approved doctoral thesis, the scope of which corresponds to 180 credits worth of studies

Public defence

The doctoral student, the author of the thesis, shall defend alone his/her thesis at a public defence, at which the Chair, external opponent and examining committee as well as the interested general public are present.

The public defence process has the following main purposes:

- to prepare a scientific first-class review of the thesis
- to provide the doctoral student the opportunity to demonstrate his/her ability to discuss research in a popular way as well as at a high academic level
- to give the general public insight into what way the doctoral student has contributed to the development of knowledge

The thesis is examined by an examining committee, awarding a grade of Pass or Fail.

Degree of Licentiate

To earn a Degree of Licentiate, a total of 120 completed credits are required, consisting of:

- approved courses and other credit-bearing modules totalling 30 credits
- an approved licentiate thesis, the scope of which corresponds to 90 credits worth of studies

Licentiate seminar

The doctoral student, the author of the thesis, shall defend alone his/her thesis at a public licentiate seminar, at which the Chair, external opponent and examining committee as well as the interested general public participate.

The thesis is examined by an examining committee, awarding a grade Pass or Fail.

Title of degree

For a doctoral degree:

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

For a licentiate degree:

Degree of Licentiate

Internationalisation

Each doctoral student should participate in at least one international academic conference during her/his period of studies and present research findings either orally or with a poster presentation.

A stay abroad of one to six months during the doctoral student period is recommended. This period of stay should be planned in consultation with the principal supervisor and can be placed either at one of the higher education institutions (HEIs) with whom Mälardalen University has an agreement or at another HEI where research of relevance to the thesis project is conducted.

Supervision

Scope and limits of supervision

For each doctoral student, a group of supervisors shall be appointed upon the student's admission, consisting of a principal supervisor and one or more assistant supervisors. One of the supervisors shall be active at the same School as the doctoral student, but the others can be active at some other institution or organisation with which the doctoral student's School has research cooperation.

A full-time doctoral student has the right to supervision corresponding to at least 100 hours per year. No supervisor shall altogether be bound up to more supervision than is equivalent to seven full-time doctoral students.

Responsibility of principal and assistant supervisor

The principal supervisor has overall responsibility for the doctoral student's education. Supervisors shall be available for the doctoral student for discussions about their studies. They shall listen to the doctoral student's ideas, show possible paths, provide constructive criticism, give their opinions on the structure of the research work, and monitor to ensure that course studies and thesis work are progressing at a suitable pace. The supervisor's role should initially have a guiding nature, but later move on to a supporting function since the educational objective is independent researchers.

It is the responsibility of the principal supervisor to check that all the courses and other credit-bearing modules have been completed before an application for public defence/licentiate seminar is submitted. The principal supervisor is also responsible for ensuring that the School's commitments as laid out in the individual study plan are fulfilled.

Required qualifications and continuing professional development for supervisors
At Mälardalen University the principal supervisor of the doctoral student shall be a teacher with associate professor qualifications or a professor at the University. The other supervisors must hold a PhD degree. The principal supervisor must have undergone training as a research supervisor. Other supervisors should have undergone training as a supervisor.

Change of supervisors and research project

In accordance with Chapter 6, Section 28 of the Higher Education Ordinance, a doctoral student who so wishes has the right to change or add/remove supervisors. Decisions to appoint a new supervisor are taken by the Faculty Board's Committee. Should the need for a change of supervisors arise, the doctoral student shall submit a written request for such.

The Faculty Board advises against doctoral students changing projects later than 18 months after admission to the third-cycle (doctoral) studies.

Preview

A preview before the public defence of the doctoral thesis is made in a final review, which takes place when the doctoral student has attained 80–90% of their study performance. This final review is held within 3–6 months before the planned public defence.

The principal supervisor is ultimately responsible for reviewing the complete thesis and determining whether an application for a public defence can be submitted to the Faculty Board's Committee.

A preview ahead of a licentiate seminar takes place in the same way as for the public defence of a doctoral thesis.

Interim regulations

Doctoral students admitted before 15 January 2021 to previous general syllabuses in Social Work must complete their studies up to the public defence in accordance with the then current general syllabus. There are no requirements for transitioning to the new revised general syllabus in Social Work for these doctoral students. The doctoral student may also choose to follow the current syllabus.

Appendix A – Degree of Licentiate

Given below are the degree requirements of the system of qualifications as well as the outcome attainment requirements for being awarded a Degree of Licentiate, as specified in Appendix 2 of the Higher Education Ordinance.

Scope

A Degree of Licentiate is awarded either after the doctoral student has completed a study programme of at least 120 credits in a subject in which third-cycle teaching is offered, or after the doctoral student has completed one part comprising at least 120 credits of a study programme intending to conclude with the award of a Degree of Doctor, if the University decides that such a Degree of Licentiate can be awarded at the University.

Outcomes

- *Knowledge and understanding*

For a Degree of Licentiate, the doctoral student shall:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding in the field of research, including current specialist knowledge in a limited area of this field, as well as specialised knowledge of research methodology in general and the methods of the specific research domain in particular.

- *Competence and skills*

For a Degree of Licentiate, the doctoral student shall:

- demonstrate the ability to identify and formulate issues with scholarly precision critically, autonomously and creatively, and to plan and use appropriate methods to undertake a limited research project and other qualified tasks within predetermined time frames in order to contribute to the formation of knowledge as well as to evaluate this work,
- demonstrate the ability, in both national international contexts, to clearly present and discuss research and research findings in speech and writing and in dialogue with the academic community and society in general, and
- demonstrate the skills required to participate autonomously in research and development work and to work autonomously in some other qualified capacity.

- *Judgement and approach*

For a Degree of Licentiate, the doctoral student shall:

- demonstrate the ability to make assessments of ethical aspects of her/his own research,
- demonstrate insight into the possibilities and limitations of research, its role in society and the responsibility of the individual for how it is used, and
- demonstrate the ability to identify the personal need for further knowledge and take responsibility for her/his ongoing learning.

- *Academic paper*

For a Degree of Licentiate, the doctoral student shall have been awarded a Pass grade for an academic paper of at least 60 credits.

- *Miscellaneous*

Specific requirements determined by each higher education institution itself within the parameters of the requirements laid down in this qualification descriptor shall apply for a Degree of Licentiate with a defined specialisation.

Appendix B – Degree of Doctor

Given below are the degree requirements of the system of qualifications as well as the outcome attainment requirements for being awarded a Degree of Doctor, as specified in Appendix 2 of the Higher Education Ordinance.

Scope

A Degree of Doctor is awarded after the doctoral student has completed a study programme of 240 credits in a subject in which third-cycle teaching is offered.

Outcomes

- *Knowledge and understanding*

For a Degree of Doctor, the doctoral student shall:

- demonstrate broad knowledge and systematic understanding of the research field, as well as advanced and up-to-date specialist knowledge in a limited area of this field, and
- demonstrate familiarity with research methodology in general and with the methods of the specific research domain in particular.

- *Competence and skills*

For a Degree of Doctor, the doctoral student shall:

- demonstrate the capacity for scholarly analysis and synthesis as well as to review and assess new and complex phenomena, issues and situations autonomously and critically,
- demonstrate the ability to identify and formulate issues with scholarly precision critically, autonomously and creatively, and to plan and use appropriate methods to undertake research and other qualified tasks within predetermined time frames, and to review and evaluate such work,
- demonstrate through a dissertation the ability to make a significant contribution to the formation of knowledge through her/his own research,
- demonstrate the ability in both national and international contexts to present and discuss research and research findings authoritatively in speech and writing and in dialogue with the academic community and society in general,
- demonstrate the ability to identify the need for further knowledge, and
- demonstrate the capacity to contribute to social development and to support the learning of others both through research and education and in some other qualified professional capacity.

- *Judgement and approach*

For a Degree of Doctor, the doctoral student shall:

- demonstrate intellectual autonomy and disciplinary rectitude as well as the ability to make assessments of research ethics, and
- demonstrate specialised insight into the possibilities and limitations of research, its role in society and the responsibility of the individual for how it is used.

- *Research thesis (doctoral thesis)*

For a Degree of Doctor, the doctoral student shall have been awarded a Pass grade for a research thesis (doctoral thesis) of at least 120 credits.

- *Miscellaneous*

Specific requirements determined by each higher education institution itself within the parameters of the requirements laid down in this

qualification descriptor shall apply for a Degree of Doctor with a defined specialisation.